

LAURA EVANS TAPES -- Mazzulla Collection, Amon Carter Museum

Tape #1 3/12/48 -- Interview from wire -- Salida, Colorado

Q: (They ask about girls who were with her who got married.)
Did they make a success of their marriage more than other
girls? or less? or...

A: Well, I only know if they're successful if they keep
corresponding with me.

Well, now Ruth and Billy Burkhardt, they're still together.
I think Jessie and Earl, til he died here about, how long
ago? It would have been a few months back. Just a few months
back ...

Judge Goff, you knew Judge Goff. He married a girl, that
beautiful girl on that bridge along here. But he, I don't
know whether they're together or not. I just received a letter
for (from?) him. He's in jail in Nevada somewhere.

And Little Peggy. I haven't heard from her in a year.
She married a fella by the name of Sanderson. He had relatives
here. They've been married four years the second day of May.
They appeared to be very happy. ⁶ of recent years, that's the
only ones -- Luray and Little Peggy, they got married.

Q: How 'bout Mildred and Betty?

A: Oh, yes, Betty. She married that, two years ago... (inaud)
That little red-headed girl. She was next door (inaud) Well,
help me out. I forget 'em all.

Q: (A lot of back and forth about who married whom and when)
Well, several years ago, about fifteen or twenty, some girl
that used to work for you married some railroad man. Big
heavy-set girl. Dark hair.

A: Oh, that must have been Jessie. That was the last war.
First World War.

Q: Who was that?

A: That was Jessie. Oh, she's a big fat woman now. She
was the one married Earl Keller. And the joke of it was,
remember when we had that terrific epidemic of the flu?

Q: Yes... I remember that.

A: Jessie was across the street, right? Then, they only
gave them fifteen dollars a month. Well, Jessie had, I
don't know how much checks from Earl Keller, but she
couldn't cash 'em in the hook shop.

So Doctor Curfman called up. He says, "Laura, have
you any girls down there can nurse?" They took the old
St. Clair Hotel for a hospital. "Well," I said "Doctor, I'll
inquire. I don't know anything about the concealed know-
ledge." (of her girls?) I knew Jessie loved to nurse.

A: Well, I knew Jessie had, she loved to nurse, so I went over. She said "Oh my god, yes."

Well, uh ... you know ... Mrs. Franks? Tim's mother? She's a nurse. "Well," she says, "Jessie, I'll show ya." That's how Jessie left the crib over there to go up to nurse for Dr. Curfman. Dr. says, "Well, Laura..." I says, "Listen, doctor," I said, "I'm gonna tell you a story." I said, "There was two colored men at one time, very much old substantial friends." Now I said, I'll come up and nurse if you'll approve of this. "And one of them died. Well, they were going to throw him in the paupers' field. Oh, he protested. 'You can't bury my friend. I'll carry him home.' Well he carried him for a little ways and laid him down; naturally enough (there was) a little odor. Carried him a little further, and the odor was a little stronger. The last time he laid him down it was terrific. He looked, he says, 'Well, you son of a bitch, if you can shit you can walk!'"

Q: (laughter)

(I was ?)

A: Well, I says, "Dr. Curfman -- (inaud) up in the hospital, and you had a person with an offensive passage, I said, 'You can shit, you can walk up!'"

"Laura, I don't want you that sick." (Dr. Curf's reply)

Q: (laughter) (if that's it ?)

A: You know, any spicy little story, I was tickled to death to tell Dr. Curfman.

(Doorbell and other sounds. Tape stops & starts. Piano music. Some chat about "Poor people got poor ways" by Laura)

A: You know in later years I got better acquainted with Dr. Curfman. You know, he was always afraid of me. He says, "Laura, you have the inclination of a tiger-woman." So I says, "Dr. I'm just as submissive..." "No you're not. You're a tiger-woman." Well, I used to be. The way I used to (inaud) that hospital with (inaud) I kept 'em all in a turmoil.

Q: The doctor thought the world of you, Laura.

A: Well, I did him, too.

(More little reminiscences of the doctor. Someone comes in and notices the wire recorder -- a woman -- they discuss it. L.E. tells the story of getting the doctor drunk on her famous "Swiss S" during the flu epidemic)

A: Well, when we had the flu, we were all closed, you know, and I had the doctor come down. The girls were all in the house. Well (inaud) Brady had the flu in bed, he was in that bed. Well I wasn't goin' to let him go to the hospital, wasn't gonna do it. (Inaud) 'Course, you know, we'd go up and rob the bootlegger of his bonded stuff. And, I knew

where it was, and I'd make him up to him (inaud) on the goods and we'd open the trunk at the foot of the bed and steal his whiskey. Well, I always had a quart bottle off, can't think of his name, used to be 'n electrician here.

Q: Campbell?

A: Huh? Yeah, L.L. Campbell. 'Cause I went out in the wilderness and drove the car in the dark when he got this case, so I knew he had it.

So anyway, so I said, "Doctor, now you know you like a preventive, dontcha? Well, I said" (inaud) is out in the dining room"-- that's when I had the dining room -- and I said, "He's resting easy. He isn't going to die. Come on, I'm going to make you one of my delicious drinks."

Well, I made him a "Swiss S!" (she laughs)

He says, "Laura, what is that? That is delicious."

Well, I said, "Doctor, it's so delicious, that one drink calls for another." We set out there in the dining room -- I'd look at him and his eyes'd get glassy. "Well, I guess I'd better be goin'." It don't affect your head, it affects you from the waist down! You lose the control of your legs! But, of course, I wasn't drinkin' oh I'd quit it, but I still had my quart bottle of the genuine (inaud).

The doctor says, "Well, I just feel wonderful my head's as clear. Yes indeed, Laura, I can't rise! (? hard to hear)

I says, "I have a lawyer, but he don't look like he'd be of much assistance to ya." (Is this Brady, sick in bed?) And you know I had to open the door and walk him over? It don't hurt ya' up here -- oh, it makes you feel so comfortable, you know. And 'bout every time he'd come down I'd say, "Doctor, how 'bout one of my prescriptions?" "I'll take it standing up, Laura." Oh! He was wonderful.

Q: 'Fraid to sit down?

A: Scared to sit down. Oh, I knew he would after two or three drinks. And it was so ... it would taste like paregoric. And you know, I was raised on paregoric. That's all the niggers gave us for cramps when we were down South, you know. That's all they knew was paregoric. And I still have the paregoric appetite, too.

(She tells about keeping the place clean with Lysol -- You couldn't breathe)

A: They had it in everything in the house, I tell ya. And I had a spiritualist upstairs. Well, I laughed at her. The spirits, I said "Tell them son of a bitches take this flu out of the house, then." And you know, we had to keep the front door locked all the time. And they come (inaud) there isn't (customers) anything wrong in here. Well, I had my orders. Everything was closed. Cribs all clear, and you know, saloons... But I never did get the flu. He gave me a shot in the arm once.

(Story about a Major and her G.I. doll)-- another guest arrives, a Greek man. More banter. L.E. tells story about politician from Sterling, Colorado, named Ed Johnson -- Chuck Armstrong opposed him -- Fred's brother, Frank Mazzulla, policeman, had his watch and \$19 stolen in '31 when Legionnaires in town.)

(4)

A: Hell -- a whore'd be a better policeman than that!
You know if my father ever knew I voted Republican,
the poor old devil'd turn over in his grave.

Announcement: (Fred Mazzulla)

This recording is coming to you from the parlor of
Laura Evans at 127 West Front St. in Salida, Colorado
on the 23rd day of March, 1948, at 9:30 p.m. Laura will
come back in a minute and resume her talk. She does not
know that this talk is being recorded (*This isn't so --
they've been talking about the damn machine all night.)

(Talk about Laura coming to visit someone in Denver --
Fred? -- She wants to go down in the basement and look
over it -- *probably referring to his 'collection' --
More chat of local interest)
Second roll of wire announced.

Laura: This speech concerns the famous Mr. Frank Gimlett,
called the Hermit. At one time a great lady fancier, and
before he'd have intercourse he'd give 'em their perfume
baths. Maybe a success and otherwise, maybe a failure...
at his own expense. (pause -- aside) Was that enough?

Q: Tell them more.

A: Well, what more can I say?

Q: What a jackass he is!

A: No, I can't abuse him. Can't abuse the boy. (laughs)

(More general talk about Gimlett and his gambling hall. They
talk about a Mr. Jones, Mr. Fisher, prize fighter and Mr.
Montgomery)

END OF TAPE # 1 -- rest is jazz music.